

# MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

## - Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq -

Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad

February 2012



**Agricultural Counselor David Salmon and Deputy Minister of Agriculture Mahdi Al-Kaisey:** On February 27, the Office of Agricultural Affairs staff met with senior officials of the Ministry of Agriculture at their main headquarters in Baghdad. The major topics discussed involved the transition of USDA work in Iraq with the closure of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, training programs under the Strategic Framework Agreement and new FAS strategic plan, the new Iraqi scholarship program to send Iraqi students to U.S. universities, the English language program set up by the US Embassy, and the International Visitor Leadership Program.



**Iraqi Importer Group Attends GulFood in Dubai:** When presented with the opportunity, private Iraqi importers are eager to participate in international trade shows where they can meet with U.S. exporters. FAS Baghdad staff organized a buyer mission of 20 Iraqi companies specializing in food imports to attend the GulFood show February 19-22, 2012. Iraqi buyers financed their own travel, but arrangements were facilitated by the Office of Agricultural Affairs and ATO Dubai. The U.S. pavilion, with 129 U.S. exhibitors, was an excellent opportunity to introduce Iraqi buyers to U.S. companies active in the Middle East region.



**Business Outreach to the Kurdish Region:** Agricultural Marketing Specialist Walid Sharif traveled to Erbil in the Kurdish region to meet with a number of importers of agricultural and food products. The trip was an opportunity to network with wholesalers and many others in the food retail business, such as the manager of the recently opened Carrefour hypermarket in Erbil. The information gathered from this trip improves Ag Office knowledge of developments in the rapidly growing food market in northern Iraq and will be incorporated into a new retail food sector report.



**Video Teleconference Training on Sheep Management:** Through a Video Teleconference (VTC) from Michigan State University to a private training hall in Baghdad, Dr. Richard Ehrhardt provided a presentation to an audience of 50 members of the Iraq Red Meat Association (IRMA) on Sheep Management -- Production and Feeding Systems. The lecture covered sheep production parameters and accelerated production systems, such as the Cornell STAR system. In addition, forage production, sheep nutrient requirements, intensive vs. extensive management systems, and

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associated feeding systems were reviewed. Sheep are the most popular red meat species in Iraq and make a significant contribution to its agriculture economy and food production for local consumption. The recorded lecture was presented in Arabic by a member of the Faculty from the College of Agriculture at University of Baghdad and shared with 13 Colleges of Agriculture throughout Iraq and their faculty and students. VTCs are provided on a monthly basis to the IRMA by MSU. This training program is managed by USDA/FAS in Washington, DC, and the U.S. Embassy's Office of Agriculture Affairs.



#### **Visit to the Ministry of Environment Central Laboratory:**

Members of the Embassy Economic Section and Pat Broyles from the Office of Agricultural Affairs visited the Ministry of Environment's (MoEv) Central Laboratory in Baghdad on February 22. The lab had modern and functioning equipment that had been provided by many parties, including U.S. contributions. The lab director and other MoEv officials identified a number of necessary lab safety, security equipment, and training needs. MoEv officials requested U.S. assistance to improve the functionality and security of the lab. Post will work with the MoEv to identify Iraqi assets

already in place for laboratory training where feasible. Additionally, ministry officials agreed with Pat's suggestion that they work with neighboring government laboratories that may have similar training needs. While the request for long-term training may not be immediately addressed, it is an important component in developing the overall capacity of this lab.



**The Office of Agricultural Affairs welcomes its new Agricultural Specialist, Talib Ahmed Al-Naqeep:** Talib Ahmed Al-Naqeep was born in 1946 in Anah city, Iraq. He earned his B.S. in agronomy from the University of Baghdad. His M.S. and PhD degrees came from the University of Nebraska, in 1975 and 1979. He worked at the University of Baghdad for 17 years, with the University of Mutah in Jordan for eight years, and at the Academy of Graduate School, Tripoli, Libya, for three years. During his career he taught many courses in the field of agronomy for both undergraduate and graduate students. His major research studies were in the area of solving some of the obstacles which face field crop production. He has also translated two textbooks and one reference in the area of crop physiology.